

## **Psychosocial Work and Home Stressors Predict Sickness Absence from Work**

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**Purpose of the study.** The aim was to identify psychosocial stressors in the work and home environment as predictors of sick leave from work in a sample of men and women in Belgium.

**Sample and methods.** Results are based on data from the BELSTRESS III study comprising 2983 male and female workers aged 30–55 years from 7 companies. Individual, socio-demographic, and psychosocial risk factors including stress at work, at home and work-home conflict, were assessed by means of self-administered questionnaires. Work stress was measured according to the Demand-Control (R. Karasek) and Effort-Reward Imbalance (J. Siegrist) models. Stress outside work and work-home conflict were assessed with standardized scales from S. Klitzman and K. Kelloway. Prospective data of registered sick leave during one calendar year were collected for 2876 participants. Psychosocial stressors were entered as continuous variables in multiple logistic regression analysis.

**Summary of results.** High sickness absence duration (a total of at least 10 sick leave days during follow-up) was observed in 31.3% of the sample. After adjusting for age, educational level and occupation, high sickness absence duration was related to the ratio of job demands over job control (B coefficient 1.72 &  $p < 0.01$  in men; B 1.30 &  $p < 0.01$  in women), effort-reward imbalance (B 0.69 &  $p < 0.001$  in men; B 0.34 &  $p < 0.05$  in women), stress outside work (B 0.13 &  $p < 0.001$  in men; B 0.07 &  $p < 0.001$  in women), work-home interference (B 0.06 &  $p < 0.001$  in men; B 0.04 &  $p < 0.001$  in women) and home-work interference (B 0.09 &  $p < 0.001$  in men; B 0.04 &  $p < 0.001$  in women). These associations were not confounded by social support in private life or health risk behaviors. In multivariate analysis including all psychosocial, socio-demographic and health behavioral factors, the main predictors of sickness absence were home-work interference in both genders, and effort-reward imbalance and stress outside work in men. In conclusion, psychosocial work stress and home-work conflict were important independent risk factors for sickness absence in middle-aged men and women. Preventive strategies aiming at a reduction of sick leave should consider these factors as possible causes.